

Arthur Peronneau Hayne to Andrew Jackson, December 1, 1814, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

COLONEL ARTHUR P. HAYNE TO JACKSON.

Balize, December 1, 1814.

Sir, In obedience to your order, I repaired with all possible expedition to New-Orleans. I left the City on the 27th ultimo, “to examine and determine, whether a Fortification at the Balize, would give greater security to New-Orleans”. I have duly appreciated the high trust which you have done me the honor to repose in me, and have very sensibly felt my own incompetency to perform it in the manner I could wish. I have performed the duty, and now do myself the honor of making the following report.

In order to be clearly understood, it is necessary to describe the various *Outlets* to the Mississippi. The principal Outlet, is the South East Pass, commonly called *Ship Channel* or *Main Bar*—this has one Branch, called North Channel—the former gives from 12 to 14 feet Water—the latter 10. The former is known by the appellation of the New-Orleans Bar, and is the point most to be guarded. The next principal Outlet, is the South West Pass, which is about 21 miles, below Fort St. Philips, and about 11 miles *above the Balize* . It gives from 10 to 12 feet Water. There are two other Outlets, but the obstacles which they present, are insurmountable to the enemy.

I have examined the Balize, and am decidedly of opinion, that a Battery, can not be erected, in such a situation as to Command the Bar. The following are my reason's and sure I am, I risk nothing in expressing the *Belief* , that *every disinterested man endowed with common sense, will concur with me in this opinion* . It is only necessary then, that I

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should inform you, that the *Distance from the Battery, which has been constructed at the Balize, to the Bar, is at least 5 miles* . The *Pilots* call it six . Can Cannon of any Calabre, be efficient and effectual at that distance? If it can, the Balize ought to be fortified, but if it cannot, which is the fact, then I say, a *Fortification in Siberia* , would be of as much service, in defending the Bar of the Mississippi, as the *Work which has been constructed at the Balize* . But again, if the British approach us, by proceeding up the Mississippi, it will be by *Gun Brigs* , carrying from 4 to 6—24 pounders—and would not the *South West Pass* , afford the enemy an opportunity of entering the Mississippi, with nearly equal advantages, leaving our Battery at the Balize, in the rear, nor is there at the South West Pass, any situation, on which a Fort could be placed, so as to command the Bar of that pass. I would however advise, two or three Vessels prepared for the purpose, to be at the Balize, and to be sunk in the Channel, so soon as the enemy should make his appearance. These Vessels might be sunk in such a position, as to prevent any Vessel drawing over 9 feet, from entering the Bar. I would also strongly recommend that a *Corps of Observation* be permanently stationed at the Balize.

I have the honor of reporting that I have examined Fort St. Philips. It is the *Key* as well as the *Kings Port of all our positions on the Mississippi* , and one upon which all of our defences must turn, all other points must be subordinate to that, and made *Links in the great Chain* . Fort St. Philips, is a military position, and well calculated for defence. Batteries placed so as to co-operate with the Fort, would in my mind, be far preferable, and would not be attended, with half the *time* or expense. It is the first position, which holds forth the prospect of a vigorous stand. The following are the positions which I would select for the Batteries. viz. one at the position, where the old Spanish work called Fort Bourbon stood, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, on the opposite side to Fort St. Philips, and in a diagonal direction, the other on the same side with Fort St. Philips, one mile higher up the River, and about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, from the above mentioned Spanish Work. Thus defended and fortified, it would be impossible for such Vessels as could enter the Bar, to pass Fort

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St. Philips— *at least if they could, it would at once establish the principle that no Batteries can prevent the passage of Armed Vessels.*

I have the honor also to report, that I have examined the English Turn and the Battery opposite, combined they form a strong position, but must be held subordinate to Fort St. Philips and its dependancies—the *latter* defended and Fortified, the former at once becomes an object of consideration.

I should do *injustice to my own feelings* , if I did not inform you, that my friend Capt. Henly of the Navy very politely accompanied me to the Balize. To his talents and information I owe more than I can express.

I have the honor to be sir, very respectfully